

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Canceled)
2. (Currently Amended) The ~~postage evidencing meter system~~ of claim [[1]] 39 wherein the user parameter comprises:
a maximum postage amount that the associated particular user of said plurality of users is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage.
3. (Currently Amended) The ~~postage evidencing meter system~~ of claim [[1]] 39 wherein the user parameter comprises:
a period of time during which the associated particular user of said plurality of users is allowed to use the meter to evidence postage.
4. (Currently Amended) The ~~postage evidencing meter system~~ of claim [[1]] 39 wherein ~~the parameter comprises: a first user parameter of said at least one user parameter comprises~~ a maximum postage amount that said associated particular user of said plurality of users is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage ~~over a selected period of time and wherein a second user parameter of said at least one user parameter comprises a period of time during which the particular user of said plurality of users is allowed to use the meter to evidence postage.~~
5. (Currently Amended) The ~~postage evidencing meter system~~ of claim [[1]] 39 further comprising:
a user interface;
a printer; and
a security module.
6. (Currently Amended) The ~~postage evidencing meter system~~ of claim [[1]] 39 wherein the authorization database is stored on a removable storage device.
7. (Currently Amended) The ~~postage evidencing meter system~~ of claim [[1]] 39 wherein the authorization database is coupled to the meter via a communication link to a remote postage information system.

8. (Canceled)

9. (Currently Amended) The system of claim [[8]] 41 wherein the at least one user parameter comprises:

a maximum postage amount that the associated particular user of said plurality of users is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage.

10. (Currently Amended) The system of claim [[8]] 41 wherein the at least one user parameter comprises:

a period of time during which the associated particular user of said plurality of users is allowed to use the meter to evidence postage.

11. (Currently Amended) The system of claim [[8]] 41 wherein the a first user parameter of the at least one user parameter includes parameters include:

a maximum postage amount that a selected the particular user of said plurality of users is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage and wherein a second user parameter of the at least one user parameter include a period of time during which the particular user of said plurality of users is allowed to use the meter to evidence postage during a selected period of time.

12. (Currently Amended) The system of claim [[8]] 41 wherein the communication link is a wireless link.

13. (Currently Amended) The system of claim [[8]] 41 wherein the communications link is a wireline link.

14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently Amended) A system for controlling postage usage, comprising: at least two postage evidencing meters, each meter having a processor and a communication module for providing a communication link between the at least two meters, wherein each of said at least two meters store at least one postage usage meter parameter that defines meter usage limits for the respective meter storing the meter parameter, and wherein at least one postage evidencing meter of said at least two postage evidencing meters stores separately storing at least one postage usage user parameter for each user of a plurality of users, wherein each of said user parameters define meter usage limits for a particular user associated with the user parameter;

wherein said postage usage parameters define different postage evidencing limits with respect to each user of said plurality of users;

wherein at least one user postage usage parameter for at least one selected said particular user of said plurality of users is exchanged between said meters via the communication link; and

wherein the processor of the meter receiving said user postage usage parameter controls an ability of the selected particular user associated with the postage usage user parameter to evidence postage using the receiving meter in accordance with the received user postage usage parameter and at least one of the meter parameters stored by the receiving meter.

16. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 15 wherein the at least one user parameter comprises:

a maximum postage amount that the selected user is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage.

17. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 15 wherein the at least one user parameter comprises:

a maximum amount of postage that can be evidenced by the selected user during a selected period of time.

18. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 15 wherein the a first user parameter said at least one user parameter comprises at least one of:

a maximum postage amount that the selected particular user is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage[[;]] and wherein a second user parameter of said at least one user parameter comprises a period of time during which the selected particular user is allowed to use the meter to evidence postage.

19. (Original) The system of claim 15 wherein the communication link is a wireless link.

20. (Original) The system of claim 15 wherein the communications link is a wireline link.

21. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 15 wherein said at least one meter postage usage parameter is a meter balance and wherein said communication link is used to transfer said meter balance postage values securely between the at least two meters using cryptographic techniques.

22. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 15 wherein the exchange of postage usage said at least one user parameters is bi-directional.

23. (Canceled)

24. (Canceled)

25. (Canceled)

26. (Canceled)

27. (Canceled)

28. (Canceled)

29. (Currently Amended) A method for controlling postage usage comprising: separately storing at least one postage usage user parameter for each user of a plurality of users of a postage meter in a postage usage database, wherein said ~~postage usage~~ user parameters establish separate postage evidencing limits for each user of said plurality of users;

storing at least one postage usage meter parameter, wherein said meter parameter establishes postage evidencing limits for all users of said postage meter;

receiving a request to evidence postage from a user of said plurality of users;

(a) determining, based on the requesting user's ~~postage usage~~ user parameter, if sufficient postage is available to fulfill the request for the requesting user;

(b) determining, based on at least one of said postage meter's meter parameters, if sufficient postage is available from an available postage balance of said postage meter used for evidencing postage to fulfill the request for the requesting user;

evidencing a requested postage amount if said (a) determining is affirmative and if said (b) determining is affirmative;

recording postage usage for the requesting user in the postage usage database; and

deducting an amount of postage used to fulfill the request for the requesting user from the available postage balance.

30. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29 further comprising: authenticating the requesting user.

31. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 29 further comprising: receiving a request to configure user parameters for the requesting user; and modifying ~~postage usage limits~~ at least one of the user parameters in the postage usage database.

32. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 31 wherein the ~~usage~~ at least one user parameter limit is at least one of:

a maximum amount of postage that can be evidenced for the requesting user;

a time period during which the requesting user is authorized to evidence postage; and a class of postage that the requesting user is authorized to evidence.

33. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 29 further comprising:
receiving a request to purchase postage for the requesting user; and
adding a purchased postage value to the ~~postage usage~~ user parameter database for the requesting user.

34. (Currently Amended) The postage evidencing meter of claim [[1]] 39, wherein the at least one user parameter comprises:

at least one of time and amount.

35. (Currently Amended) The postage evidencing meter of claim [[1]] 39, wherein the particular user is associated with at least one parameter comprises: at least two user parameters.

36. (Currently Amended) The system of claim [[8]] 41, wherein the at least one user parameter comprises:

at least one of time and amount.

37. (Currently Amended) The system of claim [[8]] 41, wherein the particular user is associated with at least one parameter comprises: at least two user parameters.

38. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 15, wherein the particular user is associated with at least one parameter comprises: at least two user parameters.

39. (New) A system for postage evidencing operable by a plurality of users, comprising:

at least one postage usage meter parameter, wherein said meter parameter limits all users' of said plurality of users ability to evidence postage using the meter;

at least one postage usage user parameter corresponding to a particular user of said plurality of users, wherein said user parameter limits said particular user's ability to evidence postage using the meter, and wherein each respective particular user of said plurality of users corresponds to a respective user parameter; and

wherein said postage evidencing meter is operable to limit said particular user's ability to evidence postage using said meter in accordance with said at least one meter parameter and said at least one user parameter.

40. (New) The postage evidencing meter of claim 39 wherein the meter parameter comprises:

a meter balance.

41. (New) A system for controlling postage usage, said system comprising:

a postage evidencing meter;

a postage information system communicatively coupled to said postage evidencing meter;

wherein the postage information system includes a database for separately storing at least one postage usage user parameter for a user of a plurality of users of said postage evidencing meter, wherein a particular user parameter associated with a particular user establishes usage thresholds which limit an ability of the particular user to evidence postage using the meter, and wherein each respective particular user is associated with a particular respective user parameter;

wherein the database also includes at least one postage usage meter parameter, wherein the meter parameter establishes usage thresholds for all users of said plurality of users; and

wherein said postage evidencing meter is operable to access said database through a communication module to limit the ability of said particular user of said plurality of users to evidence postage in accordance with the at least one associated particular user parameter and the at least one meter parameter.

42. (New) The system of claim 43 wherein the meter parameter comprises:

a meter balance.